

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A fastener for coupling together two or more items, said fastener comprising:
- (a) a connector having a first end and a second end,
  - (b) a first cross-member formed onto the first end of said connector, said first cross-member comprising a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface, and
  - (c) a second cross-member formed onto the second end of said connector.
2. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said first cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.
3. The fastener as claimed in claim 2 wherein said first cross-member is in the form of a thin disk which is generally circular in lateral cross-section.
4. The fastener as claimed in claim 2 wherein the inner surface of said first cross-member has a surface area which is slightly greater than the surface area of the outer surface of said first cross-member.
5. The fastener as claimed in claim 2 wherein said first cross-member comprises a side surface which extends between the inner surface of said first cross-member and the outer surface of said first cross-member.
6. The fastener as claimed in claim 5 wherein the side surface of said first cross-member is rounded.

7. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said connector is in the form of a thin, straight filament.

8. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein the first end of said connector is formed onto the approximate center of the inner surface of said first cross-member.

9. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said second cross-member comprises a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface.

10. The fastener as claimed in claim 9 wherein said second cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.

11. The fastener as claimed in claim 1 wherein said fastener is constructed of plastic.

12. A needle well-suited for use in dispensing a plastic fastener of the type comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof, said needle comprising:

- (a) a flat bottom wall,
- (b) a pair of spaced apart sidewalls which extend orthogonally up from said flat bottom wall, and
- (c) a pair of flanges, one flange being formed onto and extending orthogonally inward from the free end of each of said pair of sidewalls.

13. The needle as claimed in claim 12 wherein each of said pair of spaced apart sidewalls is flat.

14. The needle as claimed in claim 13 wherein each of said pair of flanges is flat.

15. The needle as claimed in claim 12 wherein said needle is shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore which is adapted to receive the cross-member of the plastic fastener, said bore being generally rectangular in lateral cross-section.

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16. The needle as claimed in claim 15 wherein the free ends of said pair of flanges are spaced apart so as to define a longitudinally-extending slot which is adapted to receive the connector of the plastic fastener.

17. The needle as claimed in claim 16 wherein said needle comprises a sharpened tip.

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18. A combination of a fastener and a needle, said fastener comprising a connector having a first cross-member at a first end thereof and a second cross-member at a second end thereof, the first cross-member having a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface, said needle terminating in a tip at a front end thereof and being shaped to define a longitudinally-extending bore and a longitudinally-extending slot, said longitudinally-extending bore being dimensioned to receive said first cross-member, said longitudinally-extending slot being dimensioned to permit said connector to extend therethrough while said cross-member is disposed within said longitudinally-extending bore.

19. The combination as claimed in claim 18 wherein said first cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.

20. The combination as claimed in claim 18 wherein the second cross-member of said fastener comprises a flat inner surface and a flat outer surface.

21. The combination as claimed in claim 20 wherein said second cross-member is in the form of a thin disk.

22. The combination as claimed in claim 18 wherein said needle comprises:

(a) a flat bottom wall,

(b) a pair of flat, spaced apart sidewalls which extend orthogonally up from said flat bottom wall, and

(c) a pair of flat flanges, one flange being formed onto and extending orthogonally inward from the free end of each of said pair of sidewalls.

23. The needle as claimed in claim 22 wherein the bore defined by said needle is generally rectangular in lateral cross-section.

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